

# Moving Toward Positive Aging For Individuals & Society

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# What is Positive Aging? \*

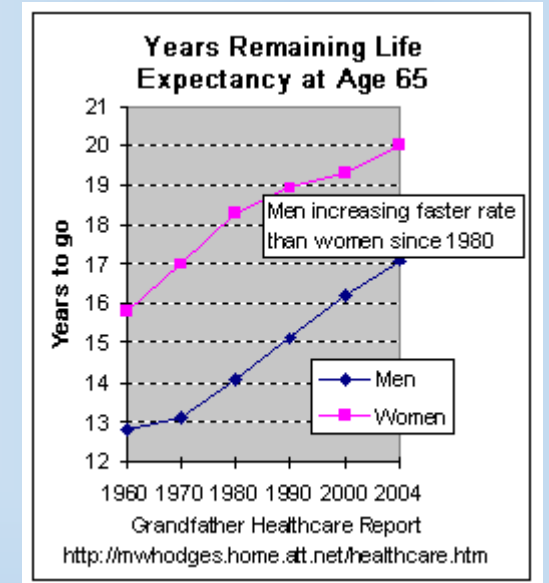
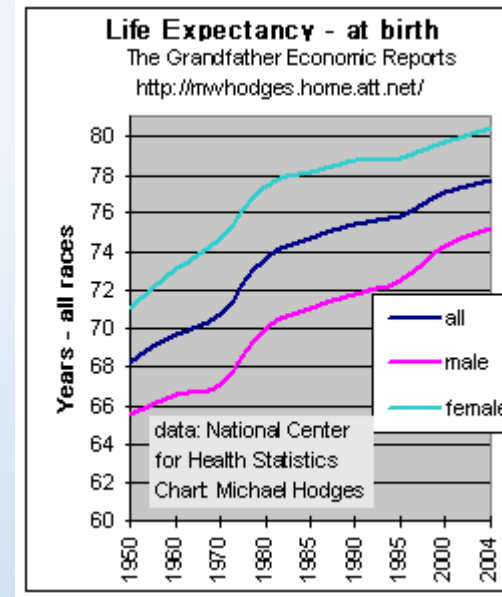
(aka: aging well, successful aging, healthy aging)

- Process of maintaining a **positive** attitude, feeling good about oneself, keeping fit and healthy, and engaging fully in life as you age
- **Develop more resilience** while strengthening a sense of fulfilment and control, despite the challenges associated with growing older (Bowling, 1993; Ranzijn, 2002)
- Opportunity to live old age happy, productive and active
- Better choices for later part of lives
  - Life course perspective; late life effects of earlier life choices

“.. the positive aging movement is about striving to create a society for all ages that prepares for and celebrates the aging process.”

# Societal Shift

- Average life expectancy at birth
  - 1900 – 47 yrs
  - 2016 – 78 yrs
- Average life expectancy at 65
  - 1900 – 12 yrs
  - 2016 – 18 yrs
- 20+ years post 'retirement'
  - A new stage of life - not yet envisioned its purpose, meaning, and opportunities
- Changing population distribution
  - >65 age group is fastest growing



# Hollywood & Media: Changing View of Aging?



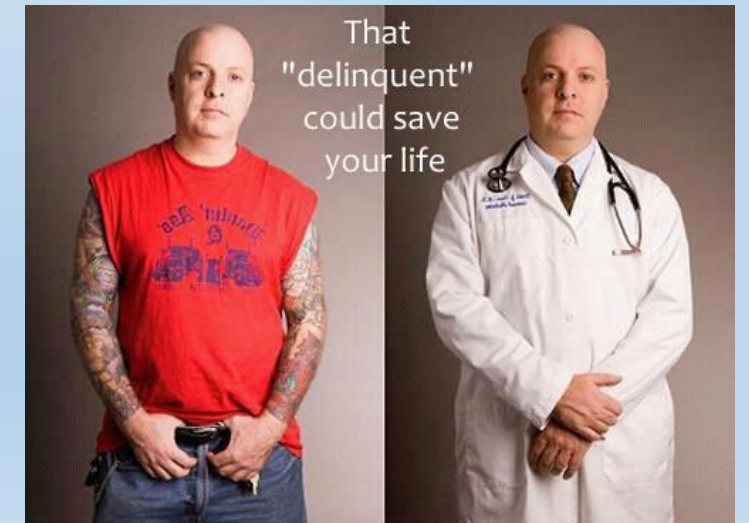
# Ways We Divide Society

- Race
- Education
- Religion
- Immigration
- Income
- Political Party
- Age – the one group we all aspire to eventually join, just not too soon



# Age Stereotypes

- Not just of elderly
  - Adults perceive youth as lazy, irresponsible, self-centered, loud, rebellious, sloppy
  - Elderly perceived as conservative, inactive, disabled, unproductive, slow, lonely
  - Older women seen as asexual
  - Older men seen as 'dashing', wise, powerful





# AGEISM – Negative Beliefs in Society



- Older age population:
  - is a 'ticking demographic time bomb'
  - is a burden society cannot afford
  - is a generation that refuses to 'hand over the baton' to the next generation
- Result is internalization of negative stereotypes
  - sense of uselessness
  - embarrassment
  - shame

**\*\*Negative internal stereotypes found to reduce life expectancy by 7 yrs (Levy et al 2002)**

# Heterogeneity of Older Population

Healthy, active (90%) ----- Frail, need support (5-10%)

Married/living with family or others ----- Living alone

Family nearby ----- Family distant

Urban and suburban ----- Rural/Remote

Working ----- Retired

Highly educated ----- Less educated

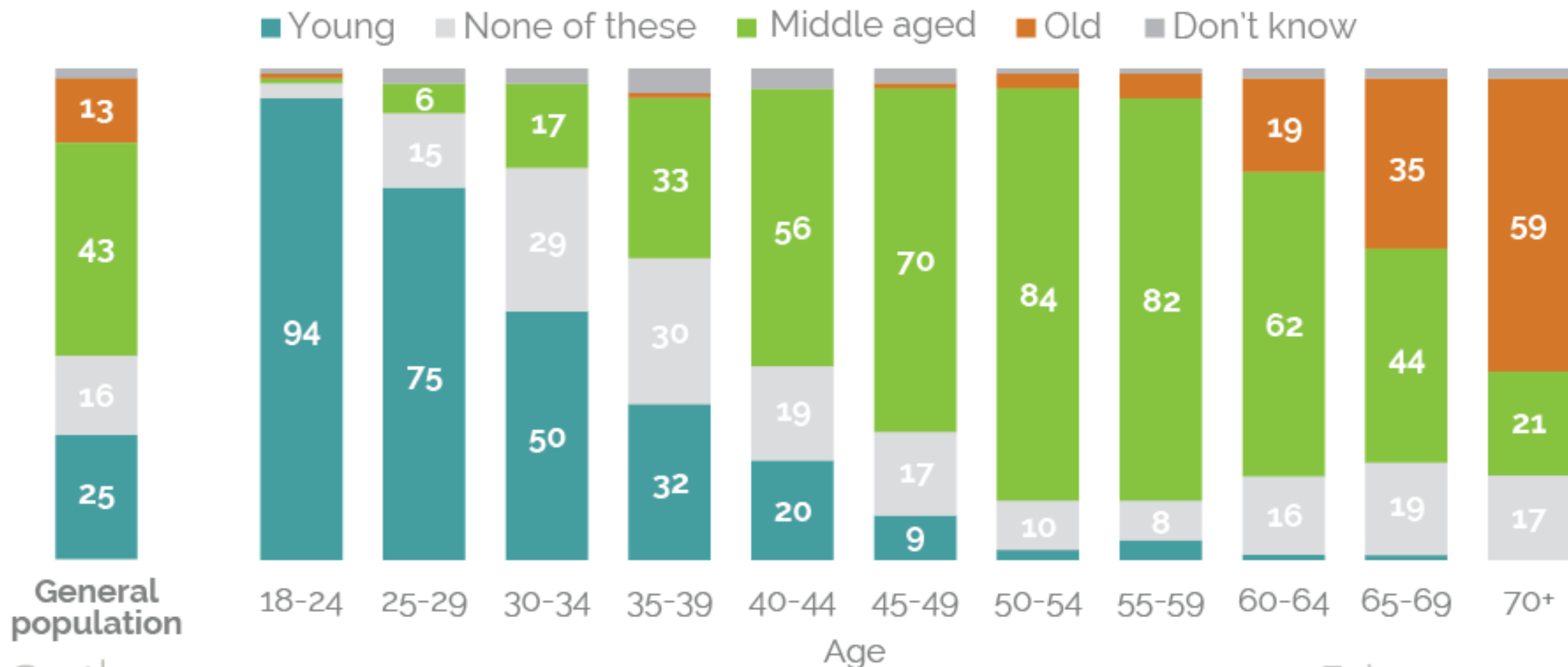
Socioeconomically Advantaged ----- Socioeconomically Disadvantaged

Native born ----- Immigrant/Refugee



# You're only as old as you feel

And do you think of yourself as... %

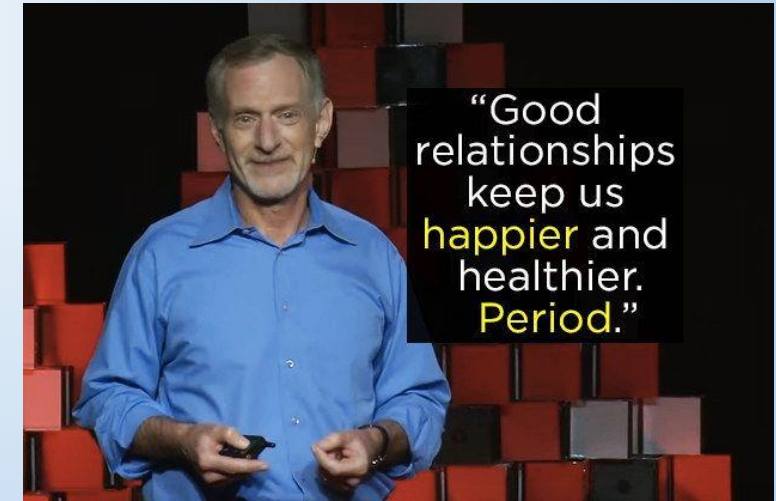


# Self-Perception of Older Adults

- Subjective appraisal of one's life experiences
- Well-being not just the absence of disorder or disease, but a condition conducive to flourishing and growth (Huppert & Cooper, 2014)
- 6 Criteria
  - Positive Relationships
  - Self-efficacy
  - Self-compassion
  - Self-awareness
  - Ability to accept change
  - A sense of humor

# What Makes a Good Life?

- Millennials
  - #1 Get rich
  - #2 Be famous
  - #3 Work hard ('lead in')
- Harvard Study of (Aging) Men
  - Relationships matter most
    - Quality of relationships and connections linked to happiness, better health, longer life
    - Replace workmates with playmates in later life
  - Loneliness is toxic
    - Lower levels of happiness
    - Poorer health in mid-life



Robert Waldinger

# Individual Happiness

- 40% is dictated by genes
  - depression (flip side) also genetically predisposed
- 15% is determined by luck
  - chronic illnesses or pain
  - war, economics, epidemic
- 40-50% is determined by the individual



# ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

4,135 men and women part of Irish Longitudinal Study on Aging (TILDA)

## FINDINGS:

- Older adults with negative attitudes towards aging had slower walking speed and worse cognitive abilities two years later
- Poorer outcome with negative attitude controlling for medications, mood, their life circumstances and other health changes over the same two-year period
- frail participants with negative attitudes towards aging had worse cognition compared to participants who were not frail

CONCLUSION: "The way we think about, talk about and write about aging may have direct effects on health. Everyone will grow older and if negative attitudes towards aging are carried throughout life they can have a detrimental, measurable effect on mental, physical and cognitive health."

# BLUE ZONES

## LONGEVITY (Individuals)

- Move naturally (walk don't drive)
- Social connection (right tribe)
- Purpose (reason to live)
- Daily stress release
- Plant-based diet
- Wine
- Spirituality or faith
- Family first

## HAPPINESS (Geography)

- Life satisfaction (Singapore)
- Social interaction (Costa Rica)
- Live with purpose (Denmark)
- USA Cities:
  - Access to green spaces
  - Walking & biking paths
  - Affordable fruits and vegetables





# RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

- Social engagement
  - Strong correlation to positive outcomes
- Quality vs quantity
  - Close connections
  - Regular contact
- Older one gets, more people you lose
  - Life long relationships replaced by new relationships
- Community connections
  - Age-segregated; housing, senior centers
  - Intergenerational; learning, care centers
  - The Village Movement; 'seniors helping seniors'

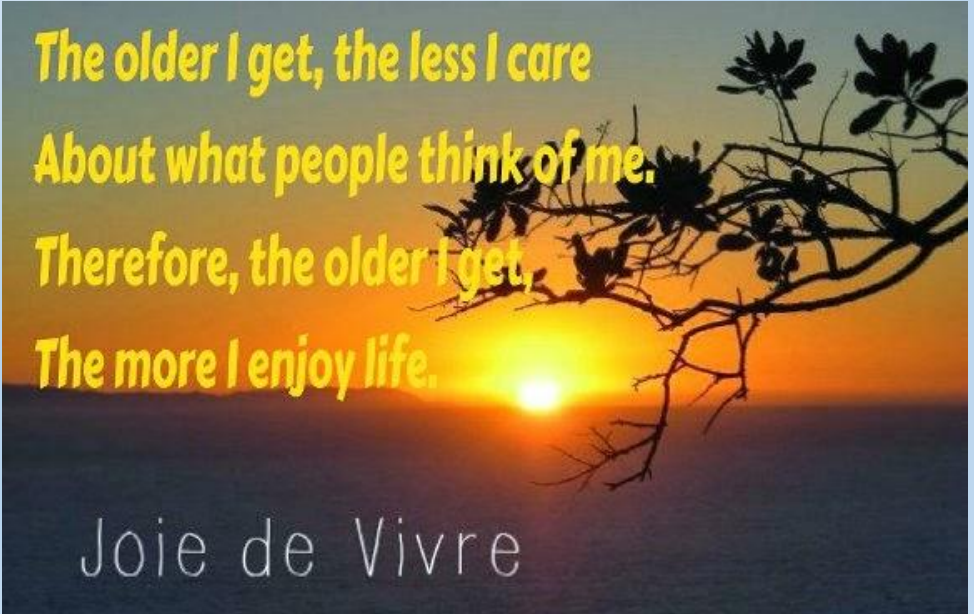


# Ways to Activate Positive Aging

- Be physically active
- Healthy habits – diet, weight, sleep
- Socially connected to others
- Positive emotions & outlook
- Don't sweat the small stuff
- Have goals
- Minimize stress
- Regular medical check-up - control medical conditions

## 3 P's of Late Life Living

- Passion
- Purpose
- Pride



The older I get, the less I care  
About what people think of me.  
Therefore, the older I get,  
The more I enjoy life.

Joie de Vivre

# Goal of Positive Aging



- 1) Support people of all ages to achieve their full potential
- 2) Respect older adults' engagement in economic, social, cultural, and family life
- 3) Foster solidarity between generations
- 4) Create a society where equality, independence, participation, care, self-actualization, and dignity of all people are the prime objectives



The image features a central vertical panel with a textured, painterly background in shades of orange, red, and brown. This central panel is flanked by two solid light blue vertical panels. Overlaid on the central panel is a quote in a black, handwritten-style font. The quote is: "Age is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and growth." Below the quote, the name "Betty Friedan" is written in the same style, preceded by a tilde (~). At the bottom left of the central panel, the text "SMART Living 365.com" is written in a smaller, black, handwritten-style font.

"Age is not lost youth  
but a new stage of  
opportunity and growth."

~Betty Friedan